

## Incidents in Real Negro Life

By Mrs. Ida Vose Woodbury

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MRS. IDA VOSE WOODBURY was born in Dennysville, Me., in 1854. She is a woman of large and varied experience in the work of Southern institutions for the education of the Negro. She is a platform speaker of rare gifts and power. She has held her present position since 1895. She



MRS. IDA VOSE WOODBURY

travels from twenty-five thousand to thirty thousand miles a year, and during the term of her service she has never failed to keep her appointments. For several years she has spoken on an average of once each day, presenting the varied phases of her work.

Speaking of some of the difficulties and inconveniences she has encountered, Mrs. Woodbury said:

"I have traveled hundreds of miles with horses and with mules, or on foot, fording rivers where the buggy would float, sitting with feet curled up under

me on the buggy seat, with my grip on my lap, because the bottom of the carriage was full of water. I have had some rich experiences in the rice swamps of Georgia.

"Come into the house of old Aunt Peggy. A bed and two boxes constitute the furniture of the room. The house is a borrowed one. Aunt Peggy is having a new one built. It will cost \$5.00, and when we ask her how she is going to pay for it, she tells us that she has a quarter already saved toward it, and she has promised the man who is building it her blankets, her only bedding besides an old comforter, as security."

The following incidents are pictures from real life, and are very strikingly portrayed by Mrs. Woodbury.

"Come with me for a moment down into Mississippi while I introduce you to old Aunt Margaret.

"Aunt Margaret had no opportunity for an education until she was seventy-five years of age, although her soul thirsted for one. Then, at that age, she started to school, and for four years with her slate and spelling book under her arm she trudged back and forth beneath the Mississippi sun. She learned to read, she learned to write her name, she learned to make change in a dollar. She had some mathematical aspirations, but they have had to be curbed. But Aunt Margaret has a wonderful fluency of Scripture, although possibly her exegesis might not commend itself to the theologians of the present day.



AUNT MARGARET.

"I found her one day reading the Bible, and I said to her, 'Aunt Margaret, what are you reading?' 'I'se reading whar it says, 'De bruised reed he will not break, nor the smoking flax he will not squench.'"

"And what do you make out of that, Aunt Margaret,' I said. 'Oh, honey,' she said, 'de bruised reed, dat am de sinner man under conviction. He feels his sins so powerful, he feel like he been all bruised and beaten; dat am the sinner man under conviction, and the smoking flax is they dat am de backsliding man. They fust lub de Lord Jesus Christ seem like his heart was all afire wit de glory of de light ob de lub, but he done backslide, and now de fire am all gone out, and he hain't doing nuffin but smoke, but de Lord Jesus Christ hain't a-going to squench him as long as he smoke,' and so Aunt Margaret takes her optimistic gospel into places where I could not go, where you could not go, and where no preacher or teacher could go, and by her very audacity and by her uniqueness she preaches the gospel of everlasting life, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear. He makes the weak things of the earth sometimes to confound the mighty, and the base things and the things that are not, to set at naught those that are."

"Come with me now for a moment to an old ladies' home supported by a colored literary club down in the city of Knoxville. It is a poor place, a primitive place. You would hardly want to spend your last days there, but it is a haven of rest to the poor old souls gathered there, six of them, four of them wholly blind, the other two nearly so. . . .